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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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AREAS OF RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE

(As a follow-up of the Evanston Assembly Report on Social Questions and because of the growing concern in the churches with the total world social situation, the Department on Church and Society of the World Council has begun a study of "The Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change". During the past year we have begun to solicit reports on the social situation in particular areas. The following descriptions of the situation in three different areas of the Middle East indicate some of the issues facing the churches there. Ensuing numbers of Background Information will contain reports from other countries as well as other information resulting from this new study project.)

EGYPT (from a correspondent)

The Problems of Poverty

Poverty is certainly one of the most serious problems of Egypt. It is difficult to be specific but I would think that half the population are barely able to exist. In practically every field of need - food, housing, clothing, etc., they have just the bare minimum. So far as schooling is concerned the government is making a serious effort to provide free schooling. The same may be said of medical help, but as yet the opportunities provided are not sufficient to cover all of the need.

There is an increased awareness particularly among the rich, I should say, during the past generation. This is evidenced in discussions, public and private, among the landowners. As yet it has not gone much beyond the awareness. Among the poor I think there is an awareness of the fact that they do not necessarily have to live like animals.

The efforts made to alleviate poverty are as yet largely in the hands of the government. There is a foreign aid program under the Point IV legislation of the United States; landowners have as yet made very little effort. The government is actually trying to alleviate poverty. I am sorry to say that as yet the churches have not done very much. There are individual congregations and individual Christians but so far the Church, as such, has not taken any very forward steps.

Community questions

The old social system is breaking down, probably because of the greater ease of communications. Radios are found in a great many villages; newspapers from Cairo are read in most; and an improved system of roads and buses is bringing people from the villages into the towns, and the railroads from the towns to the city of Cairo. I think these changes are too recent for anyone to be very comprehensive in discussing their results.

The government has organized a system of social centers which is gradually being pushed into the whole country; a system of agricultural loan banks; a system of rural hospitals and educational service. These now cover a large area of the country and are being extended as rapidly as possible.

The opportunities for education are expanding rapidly. The government, in its constitution of 1922, set out to provide free and compulsory education between the ages of 7 and 12. That is not yet 100 per cent effective but is being pushed. They have during the last few years since the Revolution Council established its government, greatly expanded the building program to provide primary, secondary and technical education along the various lines. Here again one must confess that the efforts of the Church are not very widespread or adequate.

Rural and Industrial Development

The landowning system of Egypt is quite distinctive. Some 25 years ago a careful study was made of the situation and it was found that out of 2,000,000 landowners, there were 1,800,000 with not more than a half acre. On the other end of the scale, a group of approximately 10,000 owners held more than half of the arable land which at that time was about 7,000,000 acres. In between these two groups there were groups owning fairly sizeable farms, with quite a number having 5 to 10 acres, and quite a number between one and two acres. This latter group would largely supplement their income by renting either for cash or shares from one of the large estates. Since about half the population of Egypt lives directly on the land there were at that time between 7 and 8 million people actually farming. These were largely laborers on the large estates.

After the Revolution Council became the government of Egypt in 1952 they embarked upon a very comprehensive system of redistribution. They have seized the large estates but allowed the owner to keep 250 acres and have sold the rest in small plots to peasant owners. This process is still going on. We are much too close to it to speak with certainty of the results. The new owners are of course very happy. The thousands of would-be owners for whom no such plots can be provided are certainly not so happy. The redistribution has undoubtedly caused a certain dislocation of economic life. This perhaps is one of the cause for a certain amount of unrest and uncertainty at the present time.

There is a desire upon the part of the government to foster industry. They have built some factories; they have concessions to companies, both local and foreign, for the investment of capital in new enterprises. There is probably a considerable need for foreign capital and the entry of such capital would undoubtedly provide an increase in employment. The nationalistic spirit at times, however, has led to tax measures, and the desire to help the underdog has led to very drastic labor regulations which have, to a certain extent, mitigated against the development of industries. The whole process is in a condition of flux.

Political Institutions, Population Pressure, and the Impact of the West

You can scarcely discuss this topic with regard to the Christian community because they are such a small minority and are so divided into the various groups that they exert very little influence. Their chief concern is to be as inconspicuous as possible. The largest Christian group, the Coptic Church, has a membership of somewhere around a million and a half out of a total population of 20 or 22 millions. There are approximately 14 different Christian communities large enough to have their own legal courts recognised by the government. They are at present not able to take a position of leadership as a Christian community although individual Christians have done a great deal in both government circles and in private organizations in developing a consciousness along these lines.

The latest figures are not available, but the population upon the tillable land of Egypt is certainly higher than 1600 to the square mile. There is not very much feeling upon the part of most of the population that that is too much. The Eastern ideal of the social prestige of a large family and many sons counteracts any realization that there are too many people. There are, as far as I know, no efforts at birth control clinics and only a few students of population problems realize the critical situation which the pressure of population has produced.

The United States Government has set up a considerable staff under their technical assistance program known as Point IV, which is bringing in experts along various lines in agriculture, industries and education. They are undertaking the importing of better breeds of stock, particularly chickens, the use of machinery in the reclaiming of desert land, as well as various other social organisation activities. UNESCO has set up an extensive educational

venture in the fundamental education project for the Arab states. There are fairly large foreign communities of Greek, French and Italian extraction which have invested rather largely in the enterprise of the country. These latter, however, are steadily decreasing and with the development of a strong nationalism they are finding the entry into Egypt more and more difficult. The development of the State of Israel with the support, both political and economic, of the United States is the cause of an enormous amount of bitterness. It throws an element of doubt and suspicion into the minds of the people of Egypt regarding even the best intentions of the Point IV experts. It is perhaps the one outstanding fact in their contacts with the West of which the whole country is aware. Until this question is settled upon a basis of justice and right it is doubtful if Egypt will be too happy with even the best that the West may bring.

PERSIA (from a correspondent)

The Problem of Poverty

Probably 90 per cent of the people of Iran would be classed as poor. In recent years there has been some improvement for farmers as a whole as prices of their products have increased greatly, probably more than the general cost of living. The poor have become more sensitive to their condition due to wider contacts and information and to communist propaganda. The greatest need is medical care as there is a great shortage of doctors and those there are, rarely are willing to go to the villages where the need is most acute and patients cannot pay. Schooling would probably take second place as an urgent need.

The poor are awakening. Most of the rich are aware but unwilling to make any sacrifices to improve things, though a very few out of an awakened conscience and some out of fear, are trying to do so. There is a good deal of talk, discussion in the papers, and pressure from the Shah for a more equitable distribution of income. The young educated class is especially concerned about social justice.

The Shah is carrying out a large-scale distribution of his own lands among the tenants, and in response to his pressure the government is planning to distribute government-owned lands. About 90 per cent of all arable lands are in the hands of land-owners with the farmers working as share-croppers. Point IV and the Near East Foundation have commenced organizing village cooperatives but these are in the formative stage as yet. The Army has a good cooperative store and one is being set up for civil employees. Some factories also have them. The United Nations, F.A.O., Unesco and Near East Foundation all have representatives here and the government itself employs many foreign technicians and experts.

Some dried milk has arrived but not in any considerable amount. More of both milk and surplus products are expected.

The Church in Iran is such a tiny minority that its influence on social and political life is very limited. Both church and mission have pioneered in modern education and modern medicine. So far as the problem relates to the social system of land tenure, neither has felt able to do anything effective; the mission cannot interfere in the legal set-up as it is a foreign organisation, and the Church is too small to make an impression. There are wide variations in the degree of awareness of the ultimate causes of poverty among Christians. Most are little concerned with plans for social reform. As a precariously situated minority they are not disposed to rock the boat. In the realm of education they help overcome ignorance by many village schools.

There is need for the Church to give attention and study to social problems and for a Commission to make recommendations in this field.

The Problem of the rural and urban Community

There are changes such as the increasing urbanization of the population, the slow spread of education, the awakening effect of the radio, Soviet propaganda and local injustices that contribute to desire for change, but the general pattern is largely unchanged.

Aside from the above there is growing cooperation in the villages in public projects such as building baths, mosques, mills and schools. Some increase in private ownership of land resulting in progress for the farmer.

Nearly everything in Iran heads up in the central government: hospitals, orphanages, relief activities, poor houses, literacy work, care of the sick.

There is a noticeable trend toward monogamy. Divorces are increasing, there are more suicides. Opium and other narcotics are increasingly used though the government is just now taking steps to counter this trend. A lot of strain between young people, affected by the movies and magazines, and their elders. Women are demanding equality and there are now a few marriages based on love. In the cities girls are refusing to marry old husbands picked out for them by their parents. There is a trend toward Christian ideals for the home and Moslem are attracted toward them. There is no hindrance to applying Christian ideals in Christian homes. There is usually difficulty in the case of marriages of Christian with non-Christians.

Many are leaving the villages for the towns and the towns for the cities. The Christian villages are losing their most able families who come to Teheran permanently, and formerly Christian villages are filling up with Moslems. In other villages population increase seems to make up for the departures for the cities.

Rural Development

There is widespread sharecropping and tenancy and there are also small landowners mostly in mountain valleys. About 1/5 of population is tribal.

The government has ordered an additional 20 per cent of the crop to go to the farmer, 10 per cent to him directly and 10 per cent to be put into fund for community development. Landowners try to evade this but the law is being enforced to a considerable degree. In addition, the government has built agricultural schools, made widespread use of D.D.T. with strikingly successful results, has carried out anti-locust campaigns, developed experimental farms, and is teaching better methods by demonstration films and tracts.

Help is being given by Point IV, the Near East Foundation, the United Nations, the Ford Foundation. The United Nations is preferable to Point IV as a channel, not so likely to be suspected or opposed.

Industrial and Social Development and Impact of West

There are definite plans for increased industrialization. The country wants to become self-sufficient in industry. There is not enough arable land to occupy the population without industries to absorb the surplus, especially if agriculture becomes efficient and mechanised.

Workers have insurance and social security but wages are low and housing inadequate. Privately owned factories exploit workers and lack safety provisions. Much child labour in rug factories and other industries that are privately run. The churches have done nothing regarding labour problems. Schools and churches have to some extent taught and displayed the dignity of work.

There is a need for foreign capital for industrial development but results have shown a danger of foreign interference in internal affairs. Foreign enterprise has practiced class and race discrimination, in housing, recreation and employment. Also different salary scale for foreigner and national creates resentment and jealousy. In summary, foreign enterprise aids in development, increases employment, but has undesirable effects as indicated above.

Local private initiative is valuable but usually lacking any social conscience. Tends to exploit ruthlessly, profiteer and waste resources. Needs to be strictly supervised.

Owing to this conscienceless attitude local industrialists and enterprisers are very little respected excepting for the deference always accorded to the wealthy.

Christians feel helpless in politics. Converts from Islam have no legal right to vote or hold office. Other Christian minorities such as Armenians and Assyrians have two representatives in Congress but none in the Senate nor can one be a cabinet minister. Christians are also debarred from top positions in the army, police and security forces. Nearly all political parties require that all members be Moslem.

People realize that they must adapt conditions in their society to the "great society" of the modern western world. A considerable and increasing number of Iranians are being trained to meet the need for technical and administrative personnel.

There has been much criticism of the greatest agency, Point IV. Much of this criticism is communist-inspired and unfair. The high salaries of the representative, the expensive housing that has given an excuse for advancing rents for everyone, have caused jealousy and resentment. A limited rent allowance might have avoided this. There is a need to eliminate the foreigner by training the national. Much good has been done but much has had little effect.

In these respects, Iran being rapidly westernised. The Western social habits of drinking, dancing, unusual freedom for women in society are causing much concern. Movies are considered a bad influence on the whole.

Foreigners coming out can be more carefully briefed regarding local moral standards. Men of Christian ideals should be encouraged to come out and bring their standards with them, rather than checking at home.

SYRIA (from Dr. Alford Carleton)

The Problem of Poverty

There is not as much extreme poverty in Syria today as there was a generation ago. At the same time people are far more conscious of relative poverty for there has been much more spending of money by the privileged groups and those who have not are thereby the more conscious of their not having. For a comprehensive answer it would be necessary to distinguish the nomadic peoples,

the village dwellers, the inhabitants of slum and crowded sections of the city, and those in other areas. The answer would be different in each case. In general it should be said that poverty is not in specific fields such as food, housing or clothing, but rather in a general sense of hardship and lack of opportunity relative to the opportunities they feel about them.

Certainly there is a greatly increased awareness of the need to improve standards of living. This comes partly from the situation noted above, and partly from the wide circulation of films, news magazines and the general increase in knowledge of other lands and of other peoples. To the increased mobility of the population and their increased sense of restlessness and frustration there is added of course the steady trickle of Communist, Socialist and other forms of economic and political propaganda.

There are no large scale and effective efforts for social improvement being undertaken. The government makes sporadic attempts at reform legislation, but it rarely reaches the individual in the farther reaches of the country. There is no foreign aid program in Syria. International organizations are doing relatively little. What is being done is chiefly through religious, philanthropic and other organizations such as the schools and colleges of the mission bodies and the work of the Near East Foundation.

Syria is not a beneficiary of international schemes of food distribution. In one sense it is less needy than others, for it is one of the few countries in the area which is self-supporting in fruits, vegetables and cereals.

The Mission schools have carried on the most effective efforts that there are to attack the essential causes of poverty and to help people to understand what is happening to them in the field of social life and relationships. The churches do less of this sort of work and they have no consciousness of need or even of possibility for collaboration with the secular authorities in this same effort. Each community does make the conscientious effort to take care of its own poor and otherwise dependents. There are, on a limited scale, experiments in rural welfare, agricultural improvement and fundamental education carried on chiefly by the foreign mission organizations.

There are many specific problems which ought to be the special responsibility of Christians, but they are not now conscious of them and I would hesitate to call the attention of the Christian community to them without some definite plan for inter-relationship.

The Problem of the Community

The old social system is definitely breaking down. The major cause is the greater mobility of the population which has resulted from an improved system of roads, from easy communication by buses between towns and villages and by the greater political and general security in the country which has made it possible for people to live with a conscious relationship to a larger world. In other words, the old provincialism which supported a conservative social system is rapidly dying. The question as to this being caused by outward causes or a desire for change is hardly understandable for the desire for change is itself an effect of outward forces and not something spontaneous. Those outward forces, however, may be unconscious and unintentional as in the case of the development of a system of communication between village and village.

The resulting situation of society is a serious problem of frustration and uncertainty. The major problems of life in Syria are not technological and hardly even economic. They are sociological and psychological and reach into the field of the spiritual. It is the basic problem of security, of stability, of cooperation and confidence.

Family patterns have been changing very rapidly. The arrangements with regard to marriage, the habit of married sons and daughters of living separately rather than in the ancestral homesteads, and many of the social adjustments in terms of recreation, of social responsibility and of participation in both community and religious activities has been very much affected. While divorce has not risen in statistical pattern, there is evidence that the Christian standards of family life are less respected than they were in former generations.

There is the natural tendency to move to the cities as is true in so many other countries, with a result that the villages are left definitely impoverished. What is worse, it is the more energetic and intelligent who tend to leave first. The effect upon the village community is obvious.

Educational services are expanding rapidly, particularly on the primary level. The main obstacle is the problems of finding competent teaching staff, sufficiently trained and having the right motivation. The government system of schools is expanding so fast that it has been almost impossible to maintain the teaching standards that have been desired by those in charge.

The local churches are hardly aware of these problems, and are doing very little to meet the new situation. It is not only the problem of helping their people to adjust to the breakdown of traditional standards of communal life; there is the greater problem, in their eyes, of maintaining the loyalty of the people to the Church itself. The Church is not living up to its opportunities to provide patterns of new communal living in the situation.

The Development of Political Institutions Promoting Fundamental Social Justice and Freedom

The average Christian in Syria is quite unwilling to admit that he has a personal, or the Church has a collective, responsibility for the promotion of social justice and fundamental human rights. As within the family there is a strong social consciousness, but there has been little willingness to preach or to discuss in the churches any responsibility beyond that scale. If anything, progress has been negative in recent years, as the relatively easy days of the foreign mandate have finished and a more nationalistic state has emerged with non-Christians more definitely in control. The tendency has been, in consequence, for Christians to keep their heads down and not risk offending by expressing their opinions in social or political matters.

From an outsider's point of view the most urgent problem of political life is the problem of cooperation between the various racial, religious and political elements in the population. In other words, the development of some kind of a genuine sense of national unity and common interest. From the inside point of view, however, I suspect the most urgent problem is survival for the particular group, whether religious, political or social, rather than that of cooperation with other groups.

Syria, having recently attained independence, is now in a state of trying to realize upon the hopes which had been built upon that condition. To be a small state in a big world, and to have reached independence at a time when inter-

dependence is the requirement of the hour, is hardly a satisfying experience. The desire for less dependency upon other nations is a potent political weapon to be turned in one direction or another, but actually the mood of the populatic is as much to seek commercial, as well as political, alliances as it is to try to break those alliances. We have yet to work out any satisfactory relationshi between larger and smaller nations, to say nothing of those having a more integrated economy as against those who are living in a relative state of frustration and disorganization.

The whole desire for self-government and independence has been very favorably affected by the attitude of Western nations. It is now the fact that we, who made the promises, have not always lived up to them which turns the opinion of these same nations against the West. Had we claimed less we should be judged more gently. In the same way Communism and the totalitarian states having given less promise of cooperation and common action, are not judged as harshly when they act in a totalitarian manner. I am sorry to say that the political and social ethics of the non-Christian religions have had little more effect than has the study of social ethics among the Christians. The relationships of politics and religion are very close in the Near East, but in neither case is it on the basis of the theoretical teachings of a particular religion.

Modern nationalism is not to be defined by the simple term "nationalism". Exactly what is at the moment acting in the guise of nationalism may vary widely, and therefore the Christian witness should be modified accordingly. Much of "nationalism" is merely a quite correct seeking for recognition and self-expression. Some other nationalism is merely a rationalization of the dislike of all foreigners. Some other nationalism is a confused expression for motives which may, or may not, be worthy in themselves. Therefore, the Christian witness in reply is not easily defined. The question whether or not Christians can take responsibility is probably to be answered in the affirmative As individuals Christians can, and do, and will continue to take considerable political leadership and governmental authority. At the same time the Christian collectively in the sense of a Church cannot take responsibility and the more they try to do so the further they will divide the general unity of the country and the less likely individual Christians are to have true spiritual freedom.

The Impact of the "West"

There is room for much assistance and organizational leadership, but the degree to which it can come from obviously outside sources is very doubtful indeed. Syria is a proud and relatively self-sufficient country, and therefore any aid must be given in the most tactful manner and in response to definite sense of need on the part of the people and government of Syria.

The experience with existing methods of Western Assistance raises many questions. The old Christian missions and philanthropic activities have undoubtedly made mistakes and are in the process of learning from their previous errors. The work of the United Nations' Agencies is very limited, and the relative success of each agency has depended very much upon the personalities involved and quite accidental factors in the situation.

The influence of the West in the form of capital investment is not very great but in the form of commercial influence and the replacement of all national industries, or nearly all, by the product of industrial society has been very great indeed. The effects upon social life have also been remarkable in the trades for the use of gadgets, for Western style of clothing and for the adaptation of Western ways. In this the movies have been the right hand of

commercial development and it is probably the movies which have done more to make these things popular than their availablity in the market.

The longer one lives in a land and the more he understands of the forces at work there, the less sure he is of the changes that need to be made and the less competent he is to sketch out the total organization and plan for the Christian forces in that country. That is not to deny that the Christian forces are very real and have a very significant part to play in the eventual reorganization of life and society in those lands.

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NON-EUROPEAN URBAN SOCIAL WELFARE IN SOUTH AFRICA

(The following is taken from an address delivered by Dr. Ray E. Phillips to the Witwatersrand Conference on Non-European Urban Social Work, July 20th, 1955. Dr. Phillips, who is principal of the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work, was chairman of the conference which met to consider the social problems facing social workers and welfare agencies as a result of the rapid urbanization of the non-Europeans in South Africa.)

...The movement of peoples from the country to the city is a world trend. So general is this movement that the claim has been made that "the human species is moving rapidly in the direction of an almost exclusively urban existence", and that in the forseeable future "from 85 % to 90 % of the world's population will be living in towns of 5,000 or more and practicing urban occupations".

But, we say, that seems impossible. Only one-tenth of the population living on the land! Who will do the farming and produce the food and fibres necessary for the people?

The answer seems to be that Agriculture, as carried on now in most places, may prove to be "an archaic mode of production". Increased mechanisation of agriculture results in fewer people being needed on the land... We are told that there is no technological reason why nearly all of mankind cannot live in "conurbations of large size". We see this process taking place in all countries from which statistics are available. Eighty-one per cent of the people living in the United Kingdom are in towns of over 5,000; 70 % in cities of over 20,000. In the U.S.A., 64 % of the people are described as urban. Ten cities of India have more than doubled their populations in twenty years.

The picture is the same for Africa. Thirty-seven per cent of the population of Nigeria is now living in towns of over 5,000 people. Looking at the continent as a whole, it is estimated that today one in every twenty Africans lives in large cities of over 100,000, and one in ten in cities of over 20,000 people. In our Union we know how rapidly this process is taking place. Approximately one-fifth of our native Africans are living in towns of over 20,000 and nearly a quarter in towns of over 2,000. Figures for the Coloured and Asiatic peoples would show even more heavily weighted figures in favour of urban residence.

We are met to consider the well-being or welfare of non-Europeans, many, if not most, of whom are finding it difficult to adapt themselves to new, strange conditions, to quickly make themselves "at home" in the city, to acquire those material and non-material goods and attitudes and customary folkways which make for happiness and contentment for the individual and his group.

I list here four basic "foundation stones" for the living of a meaningful and satisfactory life in our urban areas. I make no claim whatever to originality. The list can be extended almost indefinitely. I merely put forward these four, for they are all-inclusive and sufficiently general to invite our agreement.

(1) Vocational opportunity, work in gainful employment in accord with one's inclination and abilities,

(2) A Home, as a base for one's affectional relationships,

(3) Leisure, and opportunities for using leisure in pleasurable recreation of the human spirit, and

(4) Security, in one's job, home, in the respect and regard of the community and in one's conception of spiritual forces in this life and in the life hereafter.

We must keep these four basic objectives or goals more or less prominently in mind as we go on to consider in detail some of the problems of non-European Urban Life in South Africa today.

Africans face to face with Life in the City

Let us give a quick glance at some of the individuals we are going to talk about in this conference. Most of us have met Solomon Ndhlovu, probably under another name. He is a workman of middle age who has been in the city for many years. He is married with a wife and children at Itafamasi, or Bizana, or Sibasa. He visited his rural home once a year or so when he first came to the city, but he hasn't been home now, for, let's see... is it five years ? It doesn't seem that long.

Solomon is living in a house rented from the Municipal Council. Yes, there is a woman there. He was asked by this woman to help her get a house in the township by claiming to be her husband. She has two or three children by another man or men and she has a string of male acquaintances coming and going. Perhaps the woman's latest child is his; he doesn't know; who can tell? At least it doesn't belong to him for he hasn't paid lobola for the mother.

Solomon hopes some day to be able to send to Natal or Pondoland for his wife and children, but he doesn't seem to be able to save anything. His wages are low; this woman is constantly demanding this and that. He has only a few friends in the city; and finally he hears that his wife in the country has another man living with her. He keeps on working; getting up early in the morning, returning at the end of the day, tired out. He usually has his dinner and goes to bed. He may go on Sunday to see friends in the mines or in another part of town. But this man who lives next door is a Shangaan; on the other side is an umChuana. He has nothing in common with them. Tsotsis are abroad in the evening, so he stays indoors. The single candle makes the house a dark, cold place to talk in or in which to try and read the Ilanga lase Natal or the Imvo. It is cheering to the spirits to take a drink now and then of that liquor he purchased from the runner; he drinks frequently now, but it is expensive.

Solomon is a man without much hope for the future. He cannot return to his ancestral home for there is no land for him there. His work in the factory is endless repetition; drudgery. He is one of many workers, all of whom are called "Boy" or "Jim". His boss does not know his name. This house he is living in in the township is not his. So long as he pays rent he is reasonably secure, but if he gets sick and cannot pay, he is given 30 days to leave, or the woman finds another man who can pay, and he has to leave to find a place somewhere. In the country Solomon would be an "uMNumzan a "respectable man", respected by all; looked up to by the young people because he was a member of the chief's council. He would take part in an occasional exciting hunt, and would visit the homes of his neighbours for an occasional beer party with his friends. But he is getting old now and life is dull and drab and meaningless. He is nothing; he has nothing he can call his own to hand on to his children. Some day he may return to the country, but most of his old friends there have left and only the women and old people remain. In the meantime, the old, daily, monotonous round.

Sally Molebo is a young woman growing up in one of our urban townships. I will tell you about her in the words of one of her friends, a distant relative:

"Sally is the eldest of six children. Her father is a labourer in the city earning £3 per week. This is scarcely enough to pay the house-rent, the taxes, and fees to the burial society. So the man's wife goes out to work in a white home.

"But the wife tires of working for the "missus" for one pound per week, and she starts brewing illicit liquor. Sally helps her mother in disposing of it, while the father is away at work. When there is no one coming in she must go into the streets and try to persuade men to come and buy liquor in her home. Men take advantage of her. The mother commits adultery with a customer. She deserts her husband to stay with him. She cannot be married by law to husb No.2, because the legal marriage between her and husband No.1 still exists. There are no grounds for divorce. Husband No.1 takes another wife. He, too, is under bondage of the first marriage; he cannot marry this second wife, and there is no money for divorce. The girl, Sally, becomes a mother before her time. She is deserted. Her father cannot afford to maintain her and she cannot go to work for a "missus" with her child. A second man comes and offers to hire a house for Sally and provide food for her child, providing she will stay with him. She must accept the offer, not from choice, but from necessity. He does not intend to marry her and will leave after a period. The whole circle is repeated in this way until the location is full of such fatherless and lawless children. These children have given up all hope of being married to honest men...In order to earn their living they have to accept offers from unscrupulous men who keep them for six or nine months and leave them again. They never have had an opportunity to reform. Christian churches and legally married people regard them as outcasts."

We have all met Petrus Xaba, 16, born in the city. He has been lucky enough to have gone to school for a number of years. He had to leave school finally because his mother had a run of sickness and couldn't buy his books. In any case his clothes were so ragged that the other children were beginning

to call him names. The man who lived with his mother told her that he was old enough to go to work. So he tried to find work. For days he trudged about town with his permit to look for work, which he obtained at the Registration Office, but no one would employ him for he didn't look very strong. After a time he stopped looking for work for fear of the police who were accosting him and asking for his pass. He would not go again to the Registration Office for he had already had two extensions to his permit and he was afraid he would be sent out of the labour area. There are sometimes difficulties in proving that your parents are legally resident in the township. His father hadn't worked for nearly a year, and his mother brought in money by brewing liquor.

Petrus had to have money for clothes and for going to the movies in town. He found lads who were making as much as £6 and £9 a week throwing dice on the street corners... He was introduced to a Chinese shopkeeper who employed him as a runner for the Fah Fee gambling game. Then he met older youths who dressed in flashy suits. They had money to spend. He had seen them dividing their spoils under the lights in the early morning. They said they were the "big shots" like the ones you see in the movies. They offered to take Petrus with them some night and to introduce him to the European who would buy clothes or other articles that he might wish to dispose of.

He had no difficulty now in getting an identification book and his gang arranged with a white man to register him at the Registration Office as his servant on payment of a pound. Now Petrus had everything in order and could come and go as he chose. He lived well. He went out occasionally at night to European residential areas or shopping districts. These trips with members of his gang were exciting. He was thin and small and could be squeezed in through a window or transom. After such trips he had plenty of money. That meant girl friends who were prepared to take his money and presents. He laughed at the poor drudges who still went to school. He met them after school and told them that going to school was a waste of time; an educated man is paid no more than an uneducated one. It's money that counts, and only fools work for it. It's easier to live by your wits. Petrus is one of the most baffling individuals we have to consider.

The role of the Missionary Church

In closing this paper I would like to mention one of those agencies which has, undoubtedly, been as influential as has industry or the mines in starting this trek of Africans to the urban areas. I mean the missionary church. Perhaps because the relation of the Church to these urban social problems has not been placed on the programme, I may be pardoned for touching briefly on the subject.

The Union Year Book reports that over half of the African population of the Union are listed as church members, also 91 % of the Coloured people, and 5½ % of the Asiatics. So the Christian Church is in this thing. It must be concerned with what is done here. To a large degree it may be said that its teaching has created the ferment all over Africa. It may still have an important part to play, if it will, in the future shaping of the new society. With the Christian missions being relieved of the burden of education in the Union the present would seem to be the proper time for it to consider what additional enterprises it should undertake for the emergent African people.

Not so long ago the great Christian statesman, Dr. John R. Mott, told the Executive Board of one of the mission societies at work in South Africa: "Unless you do more than you have done in Africa, you have already done too much".

It would seem that the Christian Church has confined itself too exclusively and for too long a period with evangelizing the non-Christians - the "down and outs". Today the Church is faced with tens of thousands of people who have come from Christian homes, been trained in mission schools, and then have left the Church because its message was still the old appeal to the non-Christian, and its methods still limited to instructing converts from tribal animistic religion into an understanding of the Christian faith. Little or nothing in the Church's programme has been aimed at helping its members to meet and deal effectively with the pressing problems of the new day: with parent-child relatio ships; the provision of wholesome conditions under which boys and girls, young men and women, might meet and get to know one another as friends; with the questions of budgeting their small wage; how to form and run a business, and the thousand and one other matters about which these new emerging peoples might be assisted. The Church might be powerfully effective in helping people to distinguish between the good and the not-so-good elements in our civilization, assisting them to make the best use of the soil in their tribal areas; helping them to discover how our civilization "ticks"; how our democratic organizations work - in short, assisting to "ease them into our western culture".

It would appear that the mission Church is about where the Dutch Reformed Churches of the Union were a short generation ago. These churches at that time had a large European membership which did not fully understand their new social problems, and a leadership which was not trained to deal with them. The Dutch Churches awoke to the fact that the necessity was upon them to do something about poverty, delinquency, broken homes, and the rest. This called for trained social engineers. What happened? The Church developed what the Friends call "a concern" in this matter. Discussions took place at church synods. Our former Prime Minister, Dr. D.F. Malan, is reported as having said at one of these synods:

> "Can it be possible that there is in the Church a dearth of men efficiently trained in theoretical and practical sociology, men able to organize social work thoroughly, men with enough vision to break loose from the slavery of routine? Is it possible that it has never occurred to the Church to train her experts in this field? Is it possible that the Church is not abreast of the serious and changing social situation?"

The Church leaders addressed a questionnaire to its clergy asking the question: "Do you consider that theological students ought to receive more thorough training in practical sociology?" Of the replies, 94 % were in the affirmative, many stating "most certainly", "yes, high time", "emphatically yes".

As the Dutch Reformed Church made arrangements for its theological students to receive training in practical sociology and social work, so I believe the missionary churches must. A beginning has been made, but much more must be

done to prepare the future non-European clergy for this important task of assiting their people to understand their problems of living under changed conditions and to move forward themselves and do something to improve their lot.

THE TRIAL OF AN EVANGELIST IN CHINA

(The following account of an accusation meeting in China is taken from the China Bulletin, of June 13, 1955, a bi-weekly bulletin of information on Christian work in China, published by the Far Eastern Joint Office of the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches, U.S.A.)

For some months now there have been rumors that the well-known preacher and evangelist, Wang Ming-tao, had been executed. We have not reported these rumors in the Bulletin, as they were not well substantiated, but we now have a reliable report of the trial to which Wang Ming-tao was subjected, and which undoubtedly was the cause of these rumors. A correspondent in Hong King interviewed a person who was actually present at this trial in Peking, and has sent us the following report. The eye-witness is a Chinese Christian who has recently arrived in Hong Kong from Peking.

The accusation meeting took place in September 1954. All churches and other Christian organizations in Peking suddenly received orders to appoint delegates to attend an accusation meeting against Wang Ming-tao. The charges brought against him in the meeting were: (1) He has not shown sympathy with the government, and his words and actions have not been in accordance with government policy. (2) He has not taken part in the Three Self Reform Movement (now called the Three Self Patriotic Movement). (3) His preaching is very individualistic, its purpose is not clear, and he is a danger to the whole Christian movement. There was great excitement at the meeting, many people talking at once. Wang Ming-tao sat on the platform, never saying a word, and with his eyes fixed on the ceiling. Many of the women present were secretly weeping. Some wishes to leave before the meeting was over, in order to show their disapproval, but they were not permitted to go. After the accusations had been presented, the demand was made that he be put to death, or at least put into prison, but not more than about a quarter of those present gave an approving answer to this demand. The rest of them sat there silent.

Several days after the meeting the Student Christian Union of Peking started an "Oppose the persecution of Wang Ming-tao Movement". Many of these students had been regular attendants at Wang Ming-tao's church (in fact nine-tenths of

Wang Ming-tao's congregation is composed of young people). The movement spread rapidly, and within a few days most of the churches and other Christian organizations in Peking were taking part in it. From Peking it spread to Tientsin and Shanghai, so that finally Wang Ming-tao's name became known all over China, and many who had never heard of him before now learned what he had been experiencing.

For some weeks after the accusation meeting Wang Ming-tao did not preach publicly in his church, but confined himself to leading prayer-meetings in his own home, to writing, and to personal consultations, while a substitute preached for him on Sunday. But very soon he resumed his Sunday preaching, and the crowds that come to hear him are very large. A loud-speaker has been installed so that those who cannot get into the church may stand in the churchyard and hear the sermon there, and it is reported that even in the coldest winter weather the courtyard was well filled with the overflow. The popular response in his favor has been so strong that it is thought that he now stands in no danger of any further harassment.

Meantime, his quarterly magazine, The Spiritual Food Quarterly, has contin without missing a single issue. In addition, books of his sermons and other writings continue to come from the press without hindrance. The latest report of his continuing success comes by way of a letter from Peking written there on May 18, 1955, in which the crowds at Wang Ming-tao's church services are vividly described. The writer included one page from the April number of Wang Ming-tao's magazine, a page which has a personal message from the editor. This message is dated March 11, and reads as follows, in rather free translation: "In the three months since our last issue we have continued to see the grace and glory of God. Believers are being confirmed in grace and truth, and the number coming to our services is constantly increasing. Even in the coldest weather many people sit in the courtyard because the church is full, and they are able to follow the service by means of a loud-speaker. January 24-30 we had seven days of special evangelistic meetings, with meetings every afternoon at two o'clock, in which we explained the 55th chapter of Isaiah. The number who came to these meetings was the largest we have ever had at our New Year's evangelistic meetings. Even after the vacation days were over, and students had to go back to their classes, the number remained as large as ever. During the last three days many signified their intention of becoming Christians.

"My little book 'How long will Ye halt between Two Opinions' was published a cew days ago. In response to many requests, we have reprinted the article 'Different Faiths and No Faith' from last fall's quarterly, and the article 'Truth or Poison?' from the winter number as a little book with the title 'Some Important Questions'. This book was published on February 15. On February 22 I began the writing of the material for this spring number of the magazine, but since there have been so many other things to do during the day, most of the writing has been done after midnight.

"Many Christians have kindly written asking about my health. Many have been praying for me, and some have sent me medicine. For all this I am very grateful. Truly the loving fellowship of Christians is a wonderful thing. The pain in my right shoulder is now somewhat better. The numbness in my right hand has now continued for over a year, sometimes worse and sometimes better, but on the whole about the same as a year ago. I have had considerable pain in my left eye during the past few months, which prevents my being entirely comfortable.

"The letters that have come are so many that I cannot answer them all personally, and so I am writing this as an expression of my appreciation of your kindly interest. I hope you will pardon me for answering in this way instead of personally."

The page on which this personal message was printed has also the end of an article marked "translated February 22, 1955". It is a strong plea for church unity. The first sentences on the page describe a person going up in an airplane. While he is near the ground the fences and hedges that divide one field from another stand out very clearly, but as he gets higher these disappear, and then what he sees is the beauty of the unbroken landscape. "So it is with us in the church. The higher we rise in faith and love and the nearer we draw to God, the more the fences that divide one Christian sect from another tend to disappear, until at last we see only one undivided Christian Church. We are one. In comparison with the lofe of Christ, His cross, the Bible, the cup of the Lord, and the communion of the saints, all our sectarian divisions are as nothing. We must follow Christ's command and love one another, and then the hedges will soon disappear. On our common pilgrimage to heaven we must comfort and help one another."

Further Information on the situation of Pastor Wang

The October 10, 1955 issue of the China Bulletin contains further information on the case of Pastor Wang and from this we quote the following:

"It is reliably reported that Wang Ming-tao was arrested at his home in Peking on August 8. Two different letters direct from Peking confirm the fact of the arrest, and a broadside of accusations against Pastor Wang in church magazines in China during June and July furnish the background for this latest action. As to whether others besides Wang Ming-tao were also arrested, our information as yet is not quite clear. One report states that only Wang was arrested, but one of the letters from Peking states that Mrs. Wang was also arrested, and 18 young Christians of college and university age - charged with resistance to the Revolution."

"The July 31, 1955, number of The Church News, a church magazine published in Hankow, was filled with attacks upon Pastor Wang. (The following points are quoted from one of these articles.)

"1. Mr. Wang Ming-tao has never recognized the fact that the congregations founded in China by the sending missions with their missionaries were used by the imperialists for the invasion of China. Nor will he admit that there are imperialistic influences and elements remaining in China. He boldly declares that what is said to be imperialism is the truth of the word of God.

"2. In the second place Mr. Wang Ming-tao has been unwilling to draw a clear dividing line between the Chinese Christians and the imperialists. But he divided the Christians into groups - Modernists and Fundamentalists, thus starting a fire over people's beliefs. Stirring up and fanning this fire, he destroys the foundations of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

"3. Wang Ming-tao is a boaster - stealing and using phrases such as 'God raises up His servants of His own calling'. Since he is so called, Wang Ming-tao claims to have power to judge those in the New Church who, he says, have fallen and are lukewarm and thus unbelievers."

The writer then goes on with other accusations based upon Mr. Wang's actions, or failure to act. 'We accuse Wang Ming-tao because he resolutely refused to sign the petition for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Again, at the time of the National Conference in Peking in 1954, Wang Ming-tao wrote and preached a sermon entitled 'Selling the Son of Man with a Kiss', in order to destroy the unity of the Conference. Moreover, he has never said anything in oppositión to the imperialists, nor has he emphasized loyalty to one's country.' After further denunciation, the writer concludes, 'Every Christian who loves his country and his church ought to positively enter into the accusation movement against Wang Ming-tao."

Whether one or twenty were arrested on August 8, the persecution is not expected to stop there. One of the letters from Peking, written on August 9, after reporting the arrest adds these bold words, 'Peking has other servants of the Lord and believers who are already prepared to meet persecution. One can believe that in other places throughout the nation there will be true and faithful followers of the Lord who will be preparing to receive this grace'."

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THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

by Klaus Von Bismarck

(This article is taken from the new German encyclopedia on social questions Evangelischen Soziallexikon, published by Dr. Friedrich Karrenberg at the request of the German Evangelical Kirchentag (Kreuz-Verlag, Stuttgart, 1954). It is translated and published here with the permission of the publisher.)

The social structure of the Christian congregation has yet not been thoroughly studied. Any statements should only be made with discretion and require careful further checking. The present study is not concerned with any particular theological concept of the "congregation" but its aim is to examine the local parish in its social composition.

The Trend in the development in the West.

G. Howe once said that "the driving storm of God's Word has affected every social class in the Western world one after the other; and this event indicates, or at any rate closely coincides with, the awakening of that particular social class not only to its responsibility towards the Church but also to its political responsibility". Working on this basic theory, Howe characterises the German Church up to the times of the Staufer dynasty (ca. 1200 A.D.) as being feudal (hochfeudal). While in France and Upper-Italy the lesser nobility, under the influence of the Cluniac movement, (about 1000 A.D.) were the principal supporters of the papal opposition against the Emperor, in Germany the lesser nobility grew up into the traditionally feudal Church of the "Reich" and thus became its most passionate protagonists. During the time of the Reformation the responsibility for the Church shifted to the class of wealthy burghers (Grossbürgertum) and, at the end of the 17th century, to the humbler citizens (Kleinbürgertum). It is from here that the specific 19th century forms of Christian life in home and family, with Bible study, confirmation classes and the emphasis on missions at home and abroad, receive their strong impulses. "Since the working class was the first social class in our history which, with a certain unanimity, turned away from the Church, it may fairly be said that the sociological trend in church history which had begun in the early Middle-Ages, had provisionally come to an end, when the humbler burghers (Kleinbürger) became the main supporting class of the Church." - This view can provide us only with a few general points to work on. A mere glance at the history of the Reformed Churches in other countries reveals developments quite different from the above, e.g. in England, where a considerable proportion of the working class were absorbed by the Free Churches, and in the U.S.A., where the denominations show a striking sociological uniformity and exclusiveness.

Sociological Aspects of the Trend to Leave the Church.

In Germany the proportion of those who have left the Christian Churches is negligible (1950: 1,528,713 = 3.2%). But a closer examination of this trend to leave the Church reveals some important factors in the structure of the Protestant Church. Although in the last analysis balance of membership was on the credit side for the Protestant Churches up to 1905, large numbers left and joined the Free Churches and sects. "The reason given is very often that the large congregations of the provincial (Laender) churches are not congregations

in the proper Christian sense of the word. What those who leave the provincial (Laender) churches really need and desire, is pastoral care and a brotherly Christian community; their dissent is much more of a practical than of a dogmatic nature" (Kirchliches Jahrbuch of 1909, p. 329). The trend at the beginning of the 20th century to leave the Church received its impulses mainly from the political sphere. The centre of this trend was usually to be found in the industrial areas and big cities. Encouragement to leave the churches comes mostly from organised workers, especially from their leaders. Regionally, the trend is most pronounced in Northern and Western Germany. (In 1950, 13,6% of the Hamburg and 5,7% of the Bremen population did not belong to a Christian Church). During the period from 1933-45 the trend to leave the church for the first time increased in all social strata alike. As to the period after 1945 the only known fact is that Free Churches and sects show a large increase in numbers. Today, cancellation of membership in the Protestant church, without taking up membership of any other church, has very little to do with atheism in its traditional form. A special enquiry carried out in Hanover after the war showed that the number of people leaving the Church was composed as follows:

married women	37.8%
tradesmen	20.4%
employees	15.9%
workmen	9.8%
professions	8.1%
civil servants	3.1%
other occupations	4.9%

So classes which at one time were the mainstay of the Church now form by far the highest proportion of those leaving it. Cancellation of church membership increases whenever a change of procedure is introduced in levying the church taxes or when the church taxes are increased. In these particular cases the spiritual relationship to the Church has no doubt already been severed long before the actual date of leaving it. In this connection a study of the relationship between the "Church-tax-payer congregation" and the "worship congregation" seems particularly relevant.

3. The contemporary congregation and its social structure.

The most important standard for measuring active adherence to the Church is participation in Holy Communion. This varies considerably in the individual provincial (Laender) churches, e.g. in 1948, from 7% in Eutin (Schleswig-Holstein to 46% in Bavaria. For the development within the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKiD) there are the following data:

1910:	34.6	1932:	23.2	1940:	16
1920:	30.1	1934:	26.3	1943:	14
1925:	28.5	1936:	24.3	1946:	18
1930:	25.8	1939:	17.0	1948:	21

Source: Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die EKiD 1952, (79th year, p. 473)

About one fifth of all Protestant Christians are active members of their churches and can therefore be counted among the so called "hard-core congregation The social composition of this hard-core congregation and of the church councils is examined in a study by the "Sozialamt" of the "Evangelical Church in Westphali

Social composition of the people who received Protestant baptism, of those actually attending church service, and of the church councils:

	adults registered as having received Protestant baptism	distribution of church-goers acc. to class	distribution in church councils
working class	55%	10%	6%
lower middle class, middle class	25%	45%	35%
those employed in agriculture	10%	40%	45%
miscell. (university graduates etc.)	10%	5%	14%
	100%	100%	100%

This list does not state anything about church conditions in Westphalia as a whole, nevertheless reveals the general trend:

a) among the church-goers those working in agriculture and the members of the middle class are by far in the majority.

b) members of the working class are in most cases only nominal church members who pay their church taxes and claim the services of the Church only for specific official functions ("Kasualien").

c) on church councils the proportion of workers is even less than in services of worship.

d) university graduates and members of the free professions can frequently be found on the church councils, once they are active church members.

Another study carried through in congregations in industrialised areas shows different results. But here too it is clear that the majority of church-counsellors come from the lower middle and middle classes.

List of occupations of 196 church-council members in 24 Westphalian parishes:

farmers	9.2%
agriculture and forestry workers	2,1%
members of the trades and small business people	18.0%
teachers	6,6%
employees	13.2%
civil servants	6,6%
independent people without occupation (state pensioners etc.)	15.3%
members of the professions	1.5%
independant owners of business enterprises	4,1%
workers	9.2%
members of middle class employed in business	6.1%
members of middle class employed in technical enterprises	6.1%

If we divide the same people up into social groups, the point becomes even clearer:

people working in agriculture	11,3%
middle classes	58.6%
state pensioners	15.3%
employers	4.1%
working class	9.2%
professions	1,9%

The insignificant proportion of church counsellors who are working class, members of the free professions or industrial executives points to a serious narrowing of the church's social horizon.

4. The social structure of church organisations.

The same social narrowness is also felt in the groups and organisations affiliated to the Church. It finds its expression in certain forms of the social life of these organisations which make it difficult if not impossible for people with a different background to participate. This narrowness has probably something to do with the fact that these church groups and organisatic are apt to lose their power of working in the world in a missionary and formati way, however much they may still emphasise the importance of their missionary task. This temptation to live exclusively their own rather self-centred, pietistic lives applies to all denominations. Only in the women's organisatior the proportion of members from the working classes is surprisingly high.

5. Social background of pastors and their assistants.

The findings of recent investigations in Westphalia revealed the encouragi fact the since the war young pastors tend to come from a great variety of socia backgrounds. They come not only from the traditionally church-going classes bu also from the working class and from industrial circles. Their assistants - especially the full-time ones - still seem to come from lower middle class families.

6. New starting-points.

During the 19th century, when the social background from which church members were drawn was tending to grow narrower, revivalist centres sprang up in many places and in every social class, all stressing personal piety as against the nominal membership of the provincial (Laender) churches. Today this pietistic movement has been absorbed by the provincial (Laender) churches, distinctly influencing their life in the process. The social and political repercussions of the Second World War have confronted people afresh with the question of the purpose of life; but on the whole they have not led to a general re-orientation towards the Church. The question must be raised whether it is not the historically and socially conditioned forms of church life rather than the scandal of the Gospel which keep those outside the Church away from parish life. Many workers estranged from the Church have established contact with it for the first time in their lives through the activities of church organisations in industrial works; through the workers' retreats arranged by the Evangelical Academies, and through the conferences for miners and textil workers in Westphalia and the Rhine Province. Numerous leading industrialists have found their spiritual home in one of the Evangelical Academies. Various centres have sprung up as meeting-places for intellectuals who, having explored the limits of human knowledge, are now in search of faith and fellowship. Thes rather loosely organised groups lead a life alongside the local congregation ar its fixed organisations. The narrow social background, the lack of friendlines in the local church, the ways of church youth groups, the narrow pietistic and biassed missionary spirit among parish members, but also the lack of contact ar of sense of fellowship with newcomers: all this prevents a lively and active co-operation. Realisation of these problems has evoked keen interest in all questions concerning the social structure of the Christian congregation.

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ON BEING A CHRISTIAN IN THE SOCIETY OF THE NETHERLANDS

(The November 1954 issue of Background Information reported on a public discussion in Holland resulting from the publication of a pastoral charge by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Holland to the church members declaring that it is not permissible for a Catholic to be a member of Socialist trade unions nor to attend socialist meetings nor to be a regular reader of the Socialist press. In March 1955, the General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church published a pastoral letter entitled "On Being a Christian in Netherlands Society", (Christen-Zijn in de Nederlandse Samenleving) and we give here a summary of this 38-page statement.)

Introduction

The pastoral letter begins by recalling that in 1945 some days after the liberation the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church circulated an appeal to the Dutch nation. That appeal expressed gratefulness that at last liberty had come again and recalled the suffering of those who had offered their lives to the end that the nation would again be free. The liberty that the Netherlands had thus achieved meant also a great responsibility, namely that the valued liberty and suffering and the battle had cleansed us and it is recalled that the statement of 1945 declared: "The Church, commissioned by her Lord and serving amidst the people, feels the need of the present society deeply and places this on the conscience of every person in Holland. In this need it witnesses to the prophetic and apostolic love and responsibility which Jesus Christ has brought in this world. His spirit guides our people on the way to real renewal and righteousness and peace."

"Looking back over the ten years since the war the General Synod declares that today there is very much for which we have to be really grateful. We experience again a period of prosperity and most of us have the feeling that the years of battle and struggle, poverty and austerity lie far behind us.

"Furthermore, the present situation of our society compared with the pre-war years is in many respects, an improvement. We note the improved labor relations, the development of social security, the complete absence of unemployment, still feared in 1945, and the extensive development of social welfare work not only in seeking to meet social need but in actually working to prevent that need from arising."

However, according to the pastoral letter of the Synod, in spite of these favorable developments, we are not yet very far on the way to a real renewal of justice and peace. Many different opinions exist in Church and Society regarding this renewal and the means to achieve it. Even in the Church those who adhere to different opinions sometimes stand as strangers over against each other. This is especially regrettable, says the letter, because the very character of our society in so far as it has been moulded by the Reformation is at stake.

The statement of the Catholic bishops on "The Roman Catholics and the Public Life of our Times" deals with some of these questions and makes it clear that Protestants must also give new thought to the position of their Church in contemporary public life from the standpoint of the Reformation. The General Synod declares its letter is not an attempt to give a direct answer to the statement of the bishops but rather to help clarify the position of the Church of the Reformation.

In view of their responsibility Christians ought no longer to be divided about the great problems arising out of the questions of atomic science, the antagonism between East and West and the threat of a completely destructive new war.

Church and Culture

The first section of the statement deals with the topic "Church and Culture" and begins with the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian in our times?" To this question the letter gives the following answer.

"Being a Christian is in the first place a way of being, a way of existence. It is not to have a philosophy about the significance of life and the world. It means to have a Lord and to be under the authority of that Lord.

"Being a Christian is to live in personal community with Jesus Christ, to put ourselves under the authority of his word and his spirit, to trust his activity in the present and his future revelation in the Kingdom of God. These are mighty words which go far beyond the reality of our daily life and with which our life is every day in contradiction"..... When we speak as Christians then everything depends on this: that we are inspired in our opinions, reflections, principles and visions and that we either have to amend these or that we have to realize them one way or another. We are called by God in our daily lives and are guided by Him, Who wants to be from day to day the Lord of our life."

The statement of the Synod then turns to the question of the solidarity of the Christian with the world in which he lives and makes the following points: ".....we know that we are not better than the world around us, that we are with the world in perdition and also that it, with us, is the object of the grace of God. That is the reason why we expect a salvation which comes through judgement over the entire earth, so that it becomes clear that God has not renounced the world ....."

Speaking about the specific circumstances of Western Europe today the statement says, "It is our deep conviction that the present period in Western Europe asks for a new and forcible expression of human togetherness in the world, of solidarity ....."

Turning to the question of Christian cooperation with non-Christians in political and social action the letter of the Synod declares that the struggle between the authority of Christ and the power of the forces of evil is the fundamental thing that gives sense to the happenings of the world and to our acting in the world. "But we believe also that the distinction or separation of them in this period is very difficult and that in general it does not coincide with the aspirations and organizations of Christians and non-Christians of our time. Whoever puts it in this way denies the real relations as these have grown under God's judgement and patience. There is a piling up of fears by many who call themselves Christians and there is an urgent longing for a spiritual liberation by many who do not call themselves Christians. There is a submissiveness to the powers of our times even in Christian circles which paralyzes our efforts to live and think as Christians. In non-Christian circles there is a richness of grace in the dissatisfaction with and in the revolution against much that is wrong which leads them to go new ways about which we should not dare to say that God does not look favorably upon them. The Christians have to share in these ways which non-Christian circles go in

because of the common need and the new possibilities of our time. We are not allowed to wait until the so-called vital issues of the Church are attacked.

The letter states that in the field of culture the first task of the Church may not be to create a culture but "The struggle is in the first place against the powers of chaos, those powers which have always threatened our lives and also those which mankind in and through his cultural work has called up against himself." The question is how to prevent that the earth may be made uninhabitable by mankind in its stubborn blindness, and to enable it to become somewhat more habitable for the underprivileged parts of mankind, races, nations and groups. This means that the Church itself must be ready to assume its responsibility for the cultural situation. The whole Church must realize that confession and life are one and it is stated that the separation between our confessions as Christians and the practice of our lives must make us ashamed before the Lord. This makes us "co-responsible for the estrangement and enmity of many" from the Church.

Church and State

The pastoral letter points out that the Christian will be called upon to express his faith in his action in the life of the nation. This may require him to go his own different way from his fellow citizens who are non-Christians. Nevertheless he remains in profound solidarity with them. The Church of Jesus Christ has to preach His Word and to seal the preaching with a way of life. Because the Church trusts the power of the Holy Spirit "who opens hearts and overcomes all resistance, ... for that reason the Church does not trust earthly power and does not long to have it. It wants to fight only with the weapons of its witness, its prayer and its life."

On the subject of the Church and political parties the pastoral letter declares that it is impossible for the Church in view of its solidarity with all men to become itself a party in the struggle of political and social forces and powers. Moreover, the individual Christian is expected to test the cause of his own political party by "the cause of God's Kingdom". They can join only in the work of the party in accordance with a community above all parties. The choice for a certain political party is a question for the individual Christian conscience. In which party can we cooperate the most fruitfully and to the best of our knowledge and realize God's commandment to work for the preservation of human existence. The letter also declares that the Netherlands Reformed Church does not believe that the decision to join this or that party can be put on the basis of convictions which are related exclusively to the confession of the Church and on being a Christian. "If a political party in the present period in Netherlands society would present the choice in its favor as if it were a decision for God and Christ, this presentation should be branded as an unjustified use of the name of the Lord in the meaning of the 3rd commandment. The question whether a party acts according to the Word cannot be read exclusively in its programs and ideals not even when the party, for its justification, points to this Word ..... When we see all these (political) questions and see all the different decisions of position, it is impossible for us to make an absolute decision with the stress of Higher Authority about the obedience to the Word in one party and the non-obedience in another party.' ..... Acting according to God's will in the present time in the Netherlands cannot be identified with the actions of one of our democratic parties.'

Referring to the problems of social and economic life, the letter of the Synod declares that our whole life has to be a reply to the action of God in Jesus Christ and even our action in the social realm has to be such a reply.

The pastoral letter points out that the World Council conferences at Amsterdam and Evanston have provided useful norms for Christians in their actions in the social realm. In social action Christians should not work in organizations separated from non-Christians. In a disunited society "The Christian has a task wherever in any way possible to implement God's commitment in the midst of the world, working together with others (outside the Church) at the upbuilding of a Responsible Society". Likewise the service of the Church should not be limited to compassion alone because it is God's will that life should be saved from chaos and preserved from perishing. For that reason the Church has to remember its prophetic and priestly calling and be constantly occupied with it in all areas of the social and the cultural life of a society which is in a crisis of disunity.

The World of Nations and the Oikumene

Just as the national life cannot really be renewed without a clear insight into the highest authority for thought and action, so the right basis for international life cannot be found without a clear insight about the calling and purpose of mankind in this world. The pastoral letter declares that it is for this reason that the Christian and the Church must witness today to the justice of God in the forming and the working of international institutions. "Neither the fear of communism nor the compulsion of economic development has to be the only and the last motive which makes him cooperates at the promoting of a wholesome devaluation of all the boundaries of national existence".

The Reformed Churches of Western Europe must have greater cooperation amongst themselves. But the Church must also see that we have entered the atomic period and recognize that security in the former sense of the word is not possible anymore. We stand before the decision between the way to an international order in which peace, justice and freedom are assured or the way to a total perishing of even that which we want to defend. "For that reason", the letter declares, "the Church which is called out of all peoples cannot be content with the existing separation between East and West but shall have to try to build new bridges and to struggle against the powers which lead us to a new war ..... In the first place that requires of us to contact all who live on the other side of the East and West abyss and who profess with us the same Lord." This requires new forms of community between the Netherlands Reformed Church and other Churches.

The final passages of the letter deal with "the power of the expectation". We expect a new earth where justice lives (1 Peter 3 : 13). This is not another earth, nor another heaven, but the same, incredibly glorified. The form of this world passes (1 Cor. 7 : 31) with all pride, selfishness, deceit, injustice and oppression.

"We should be strangers in this world. We know of the battle which is going on between the Lord of the cosmos and all the evil powers. We know who will have the victory. This expectation prevents us from being at peace with the existing situations.

It is stated: "On the basis of the sacred discontent with which we hope that the earth will come again under its lawful King, we refuse to stand still at the boundaries at which the alliance of spiritual neutralism and sectarianism want to keep us. This brings with it a struggle ". The letter closes with the following sentence: "We know clearly and we will state it here that the faith in our Lord to whom is given all power, and the expectation of the new earth which we shall inherit, are our only and our sufficient basis to go persistently o our earthly way."

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